



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

**FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the Matter of J.A., Correction
Officer Recruit (S9988R),
Department of Corrections

Medical Review Panel Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2017-3098

ISSUED: July 24, 2018 (BS)

J.A. appeals her rejection as a Correction Officer Recruit candidate by the Department of Corrections and its request to remove her name from the eligible list for Correction Officer Recruit (S9988R) on the basis of psychological unfitness to perform effectively the duties of the position.

This appeal was brought before the Medical Review Panel on April 27, 2018, which rendered the attached report and recommendation on April 27, 2018. Exceptions were filed by the appellant.

The report by the Medical Review Panel discusses all submitted evaluations. It notes that Dr. Zhang Liang (evaluator on behalf of the appointing authority) carried out a psychological evaluation of the appellant and characterized the appellant as presenting with significant problems, including emotional dysregulation and poor stress tolerance. Dr. Liang concluded that the appellant was not psychologically suited for employment as a Correction Officer Recruit. Dr. Robert S. Sozzi (evaluator on behalf of the appellant) carried out a psychiatric evaluation of the appellant, who had been in his care for post traumatic stress symptoms following an automobile accident, and he opined that she had completely recovered from her accident induced stress disorder. Dr. Sozzi found her to be psychologically suitable for employment as a Correction Officer Recruit.

The evaluators on behalf of the appellant and the appointing authority reached differing conclusions and recommendations. The Panel concluded that the negative recommendation finds support in emotional dysregulation, poor stress tolerance,

and integrity. The Panel further noted significant concerns about bias exhibited by the appellant and her ability to work with people of diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the Panel concluded that the test results and procedures and the behavioral record, when viewed in light of the Job Specification for Correction Officer Recruit, indicate that the candidate is psychologically unfit to perform effectively the duties of the position sought, and therefore, the action of the hiring authority should be upheld. Accordingly, the Panel recommended that the applicant be removed from the eligible list.

In her exceptions, the appellant argues that her “words had been misconstrued” and that, rather than focusing on her psychological suitability, the Panel rejected her on the basis of her “personal opinions.” The appellant asserts that she completed the academy, had previously been previously found “not guilty” in a disciplinary matter, entered into a settlement agreement, and returned to work in the same facility. The appellant argues she has been “misrepresented” and that she is psychologically suitable to work as a Correction Officer Recruit.

CONCLUSION

The Class Specification for Correction Officer Recruit is the official job description for such State positions within the civil service system. According to the specification, an Officer is involved in providing appropriate care and custody of a designated group of inmates. These Officers must strictly follow rules, regulations, policies and other operational procedures of that institution. Examples of work include: encouraging inmates toward complete social rehabilitation; patrolling assigned areas and reporting unusual incidents immediately; preventing disturbances and escapes; maintaining discipline in areas where there are groups of inmates; ensuring that institution equipment is maintained and kept clean; inspecting all places of possible egress by inmates; finding weapons on inmates or grounds; noting suspicious persons and conditions and taking appropriate actions; and performing investigations and preparing detailed and cohesive reports.

The specification notes the following as required skills and abilities needed to perform the job: the ability to understand, remember and carry out oral and written directions and to learn quickly from written and verbal explanations; the ability to analyze custodial problems, organize work and develop effective work methods; the ability to recognize significant conditions and take proper actions in accordance with prescribed rules; the ability to perform repetitive work without loss of equanimity, patience or courtesy; the ability to remain calm and decisive in emergency situations and to retain emotional stability; the ability to give clear, accurate and explicit directions; and the ability to prepare clear, accurate and informative reports of significant conditions and actions taken.

The Civil Service Commission has reviewed the job specification for this title and the duties and abilities encompassed therein and found that the psychological traits, which were identified and supported by test procedures and the behavioral record, relate adversely to the appellant's ability to effectively perform the duties of the title. The Commission finds that the appellant's exceptions do not persuasively dispute the findings and recommendations of the Panel in this regard. The Panel's concerns centered on the appellant's emotional dysregulation, poor stress tolerance, and bias attitudes she endorsed. Prior to making its report and recommendation, the Commission notes that the Panel conducts an independent review of all of the raw data presented by the parties as well as the raw data and recommendations and conclusions drawn by the various evaluators prior to rendering its own conclusions and recommendations, which are based firmly on the totality of the record presented to it. The Panel's observations regarding the appellant's employment history, responses to the various assessment tools, and appearance before the Panel are based on its expertise in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, as well as its experience in evaluating hundreds of appellants. The Commission agrees with the Panel's assessment that if the appellant continues to establish a positive employment history, he may be deemed psychologically suitable at some point in the future should he chose to re-apply. Having considered the record and the Medical Review Panel's report and recommendation issued thereon and having made an independent evaluation of same, the Civil Service Commission accepted and adopted the findings and conclusions as contained in the attached Medical Review Panel's report and recommendation.

ORDER

The Civil Service Commission finds that the appointing authority has met its burden of proof that J.A. is psychologically unfit to perform effectively the duties of a Correction Officer Recruit and, therefore, the Commission orders that her name be removed from the subject eligible list.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ON
THE 18TH DAY OF JULY, 2018

Deirdre L. Webster Cobb

Deirdré L. Webster Cobb
Chairperson, Civil Service Commission

Inquiries
and
Correspondence:

Christopher S. Myers
Director
Division of Appeals
and Regulatory Affairs
Civil Service Commission
Written Record Appeals Unit
P.O. Box 312
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0312

Attachment

c: J.A.
Veronica Tingle
Kelly Glenn